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Pope Leo XIV leaves at the end of his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, Wednesday, June 18, 2025. (AP/Alessandra Tarantino)

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Pope Leo XIV approved expanded benefits for Vatican employees with children, formalizing the five-day paternity leave granted by Pope Francis in January and raising the age of children covered by the Vatican's family allowance.

Maximino Caballero Ledo, prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy, issued a document Aug. 11 saying Leo personally approved the changes July 28.

The Vatican had announced Jan. 15 that Francis expanded paternity leave for new fathers employed by the Vatican governor's office — including the Vatican Museums, post office, police and fire departments — to five working days. Previously, the father of a newborn or newly adopted or newly fostered child would have three paid days off.

A Vatican employee with a child who has a severe disability also is entitled to three paid working days off each month to help care for that child, the new rules said.

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The new policy applies to all Vatican employees, including those who work for offices of the Roman Curia. The paternity leave must be taken within 30 days of becoming a new father. The rules left unchanged the Vatican maternity leave policy, which includes the final month of pregnancy and five months after the arrival of a new child.

The pope also approved increasing the age of dependent children when determining the amount of an employee's family allowance. Previously, dependents were considered sons and daughters under 18 years of age, unless they were enrolled in a university or other studies. Under the new rules, children in secondary school even until the age of 20 are covered as are university students until the age of 26, rather than the previous 24.

The Vatican also gives employees a one-time payment when they have a new baby. The amount, set and published at the beginning of each year, currently is 2,481.88 euros (about $2,877).